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FORUM CONTEMPERANUEUS: re-connecting society through public interaction

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FORUM CONTEMPERANUEUS

re-connecting society through public interaction

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Syracuse University School of Architecture
Arc 505 Thesis Prep Fall '12

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abstract

Throughout history the public forum served as a vital hub in many cities. This multi-programmed space was the commercial, governmental, and religious center, used by its occupants daily for anything from buying and selling goods to taking orders from the emperor, or even praying to the gods. This culturally rich space however died off, almost erased from the world entirely, leaving us with nothing but ruins of what once were possibly the most important architectures to ever exist. I am proposing to revitalize this once great typology, but in an entirely new form.

One of the earliest versions of the public forum also happened to be one of the most successful models for many more to come. The Roman Public Forum was originally constructed in the 8th century B.C. and developed over a number of centuries gradually. Religious and governmental buildings along the periphery dominated the space programmatically, with a commercial marketplace located in the middle of the piazza. The space served as a gathering place within the city, and facilitated interaction and essential functions for the citizens of Rome. The proportions and overall size of the space were written about by Vitruvius in his 10 Books on Architecture, where he mentions that the size “is large enough to contain a crowd, but not too large as to dwarf a small one.”

Somewhere along the way the idea of the public forum was destroyed. At the beginnings of Christianity, the religious Paegan basilicas and temples were no longer relevant, and in the middle ages there was a shift toward public piazzas dominated by a church. In today's day and age however, there are more religious groups than ever before, and less and less people following a specific faith at all. As for the governmental functions of a public forum such as speech giving, decision-making, order giving and information sharing, there are now a plethora of digital technologies that put this information at our fingertips. The marketplace may be the only function of the original public forum that is still necessary to this day. Consumerism has taken control over our world, and has become the dominating factor everywhere over Religion. (duomo)

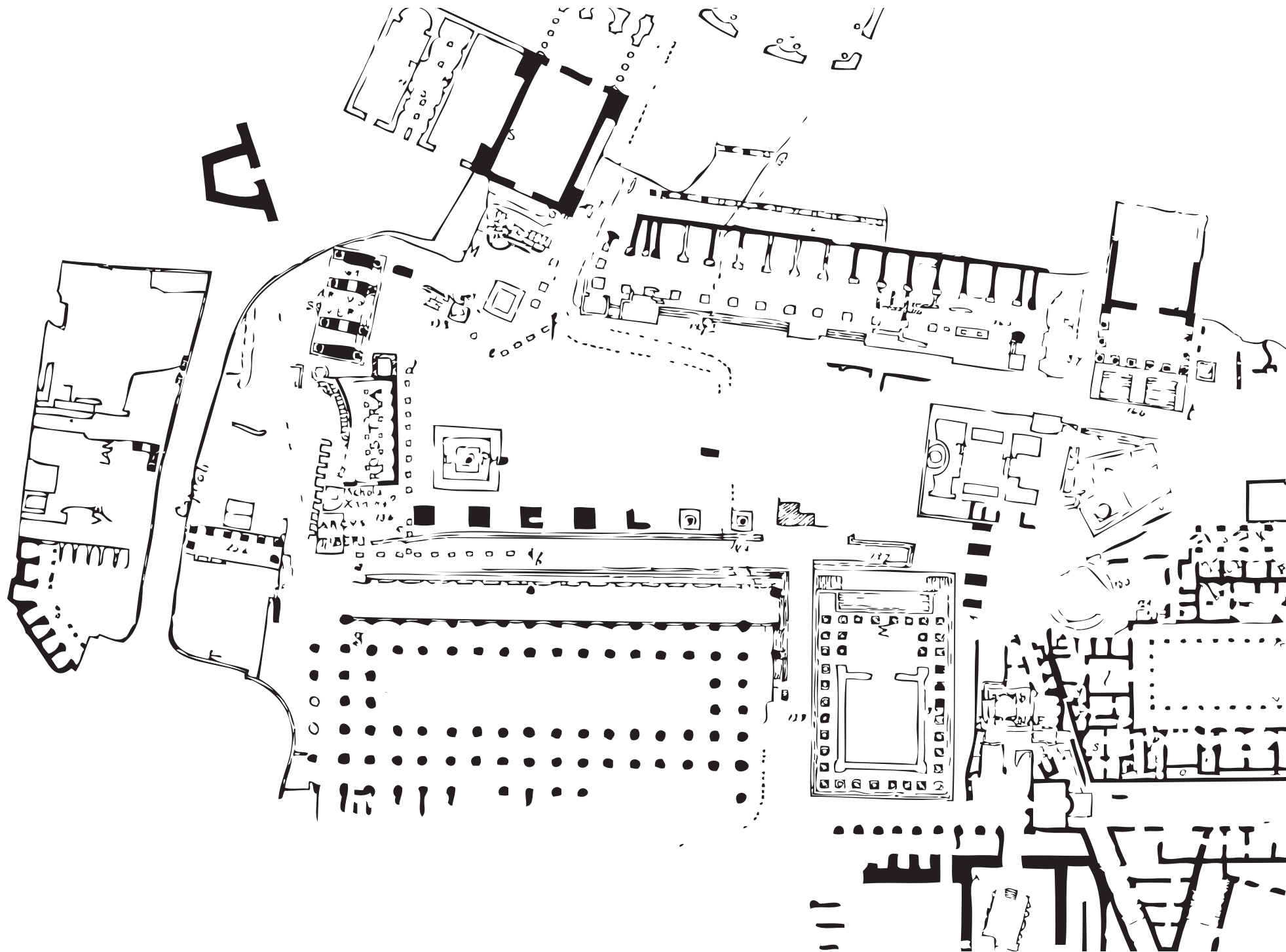
With the loss of the public forum, a sense of society, interaction among people, and a public place for everyone has vanished. With that in mind however, the old programmatic planning of the public forum are no longer necessary. I am proposing for the creation of a new typology, a contemporary forum driven by our consumerist culture.

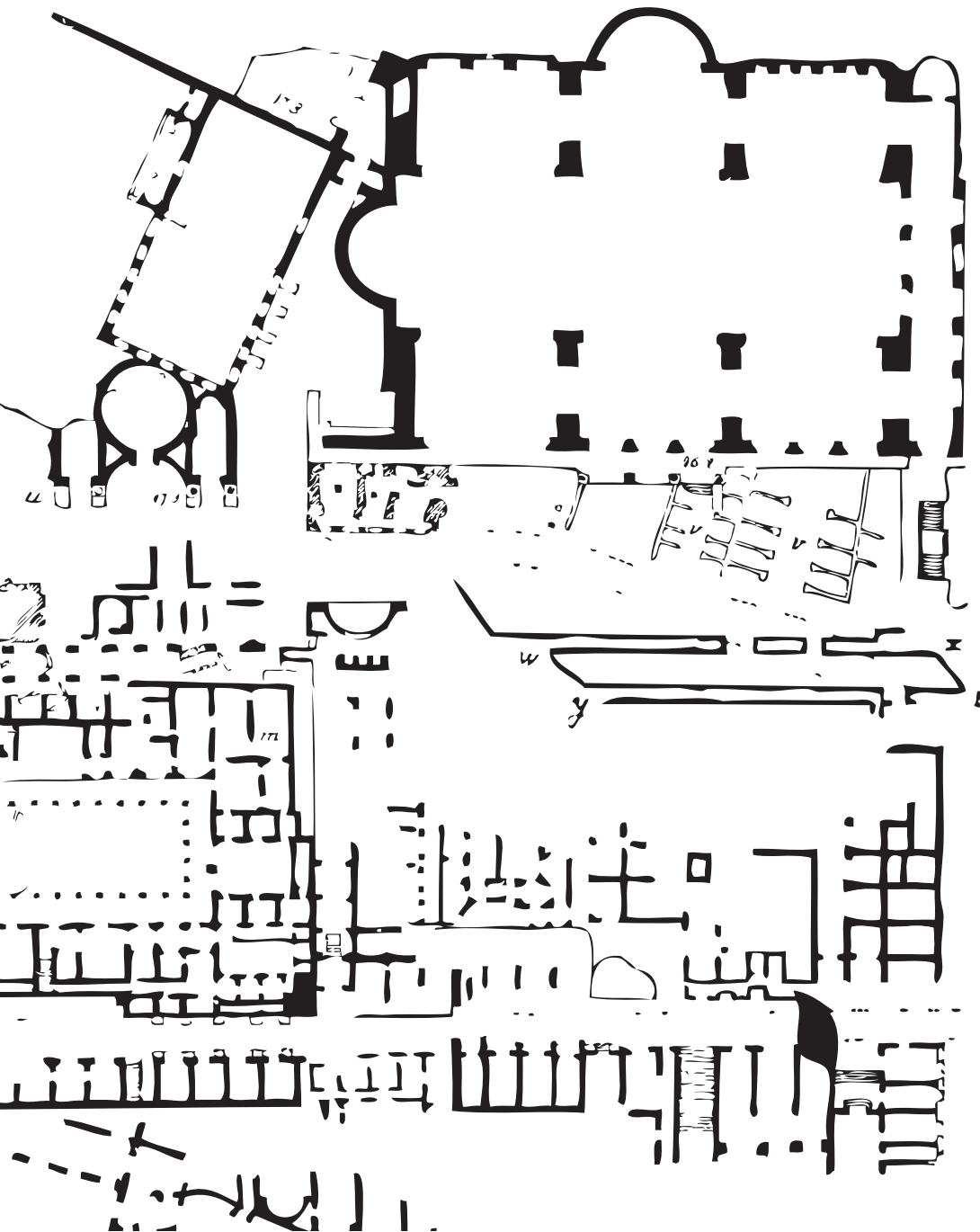
The marketplace still plays a very important role in today's world, however that cannot solely be the driver of this new space. Another program vital for success in today's cities must be incorporated. I am proposing a major transportation hub to be this program. Together, the forum will make its return in every city worldwide.

The first program, the market, is absolutely necessary in the success of this new typology. In our consumerist world, people are always constantly buying things; food, clothing, electronics, and other miscellaneous goods. The success of countries, states, communities, families, and individuals is most commonly measured by their wealth and their economic success. The other program, the transportation hub, is equally as important for the success of the new public forum. In every city, at least one transportation hub works to distribute workers through a network of multiple systems to get them to their jobs, which in turn stimulate economic success and the possibility for commercial programs to thrive.

In New York City's downtown financial district sits the South Street Seaport, a historic site for one of the cities very first fresh food markets. At this very same location a number of public transportation systems converge, but without a single shared hub connecting them all together. On water there is the Staten Island ferry and the New York water taxi. The New York City bus system also has several routes with stops right at the seaport. Underground there are multiple subway trains that service stops in the general area, but none with direct stops at the seaport. The New York City MTA has planned a 2nd avenue subway line that will one day service a seaport stop, resulting in a total of 5 different train routes converging at this location, making it one of the top 10 busiest subway stations alone in all of New York. With this foot traffic, the new hub will stimulate an unprecedented new type of architecture, bringing communities and entire cities together, just as the Roman Forum did during antiquity.

This new typology will serve a great social significance in any city it is placed in. Its ability to gather and withhold a large number of people is its fundamental importance. Today's society has lost its interactivity. Through digital technologies, more and more of us are glued to smartphones, laptops and tablets. If this trend continues without any intervention, it will result in us living "along together." The public forum was the first feature of any and all forms of "civitas" for thousands of years. We are responsible for bringing this urban feature back to our contemporary cities before it is too late.





the public forum

the creation of one of the most influential public spaces

Throughout history public spaces have played a fundamental role in shaping cities. These public spaces have changed program over time, but one thing they have in common is that they operate as collectors of people.

The Roman Forum is one of the earliest examples of public space. This chapter will take an in depth look at the programmatic makeup of the forum and what lead to it's success.

800 B.C.

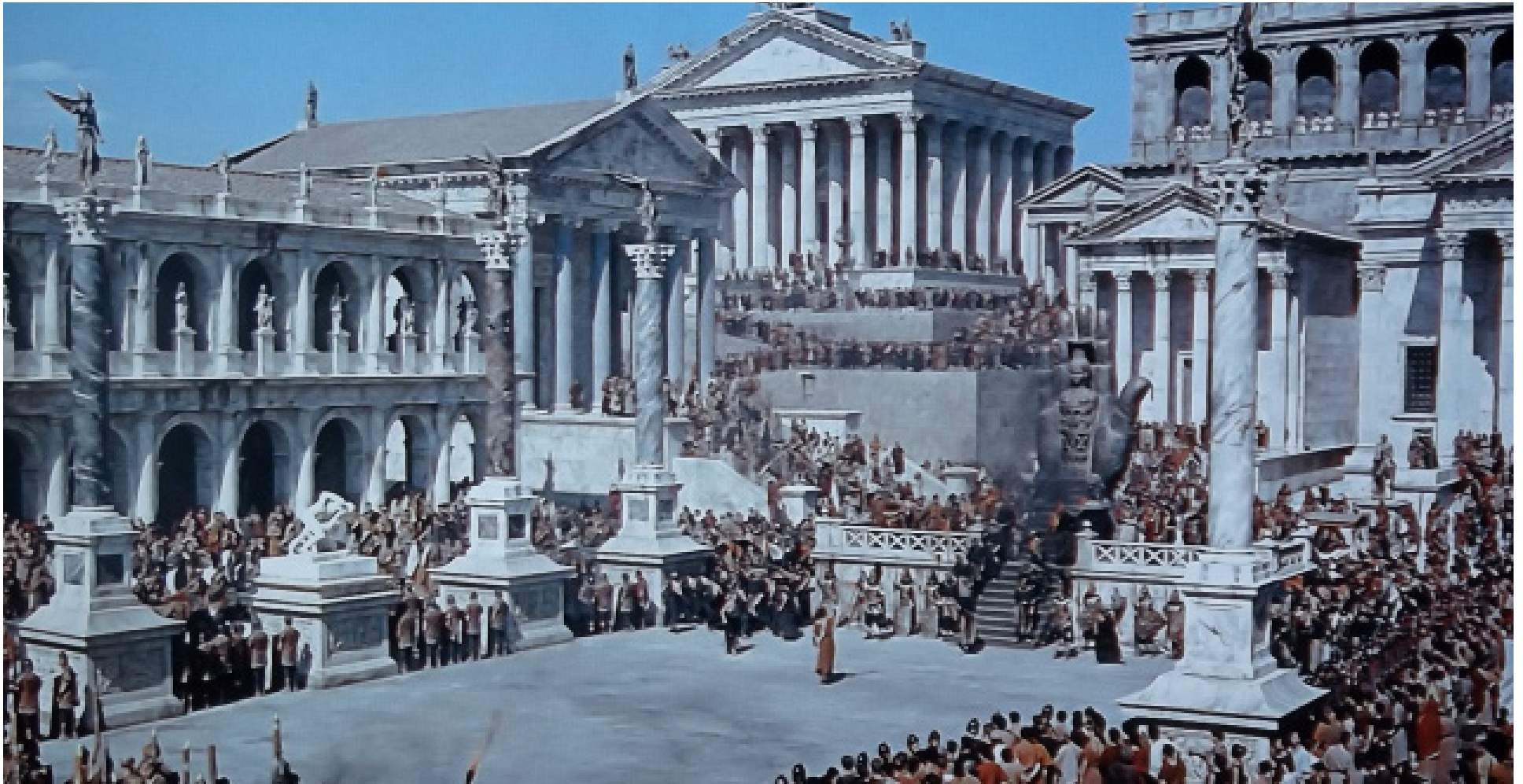
the public forum

the roman forum rome

The roman forum can be thought of as one of the very first successful public spaces ever constructed. The forum was designed around a series of central courts, with the buildings on the peripheries programmed as fundamental government and commercial hubs for the entire city to use.

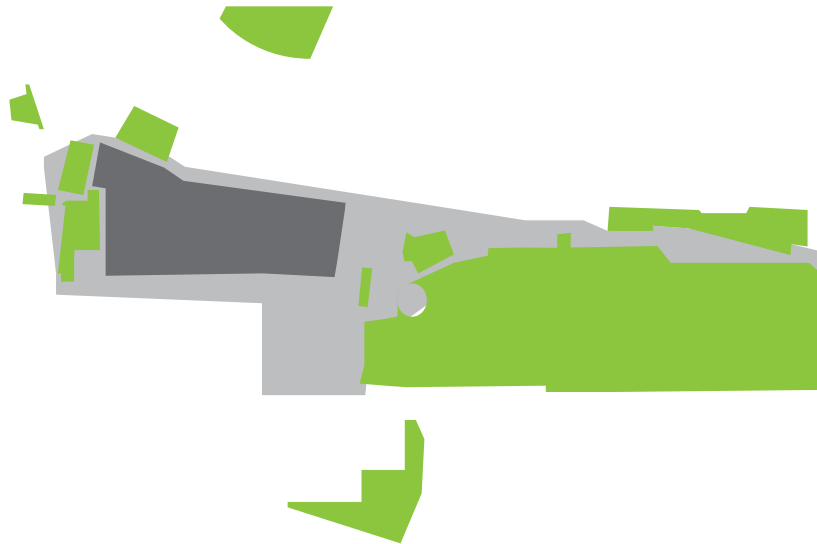
Because of the densely packed planing of this area of the city, thousands of romans would congregate daily to mingle, discuss current events, and buy or sell products. Since a majority of the citizens would gather in this location, the emperor would use the forum as a platform to make announcements, raise questions, or discuss important political happenings .







+



\$





PERTINACIAVGPRINPATRIAE PARTHICO ARABICO ET
XIMO TRIUNVICPOTESTXIMPXICOSIII PROCOS ET
VGINO FELICITRIUNVICPOTESTVICOS PROCOS EP
TISSE
MPER
S EO
SOV DER INCIPIVS
MCVE POPV LI ROMANI PRODA GATVM
IDOMFORISVE S · P · Q · R



the public forum

*the **death** of one of the most influential public spaces*

The forum thrived due to its direct relationship with major institutions of the state. Religion and Government had a direct impact on the type of interaction, learning and exchange that occurred in the forum.

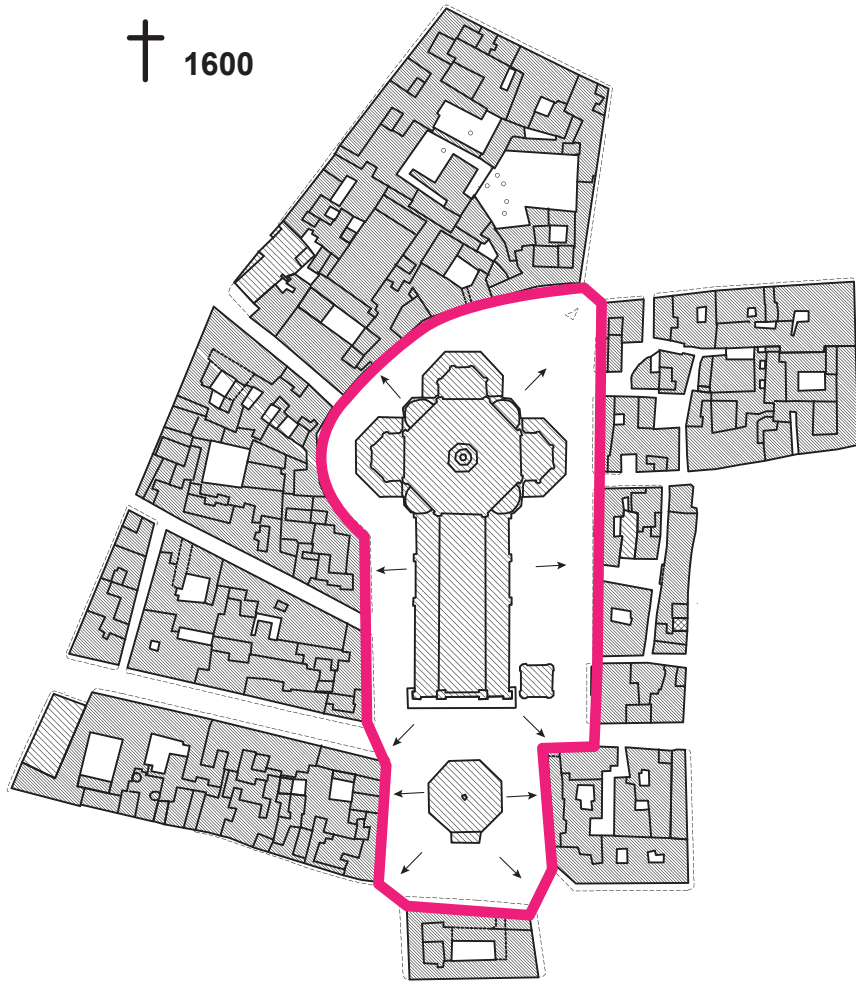
Over the last few centuries, these two aspects which once governed the public forum have become almost irrelevant in our consumerist culture. This chapter will look at how these once thriving institutions have dwindled in importance.

1400 A.D.
the religious center

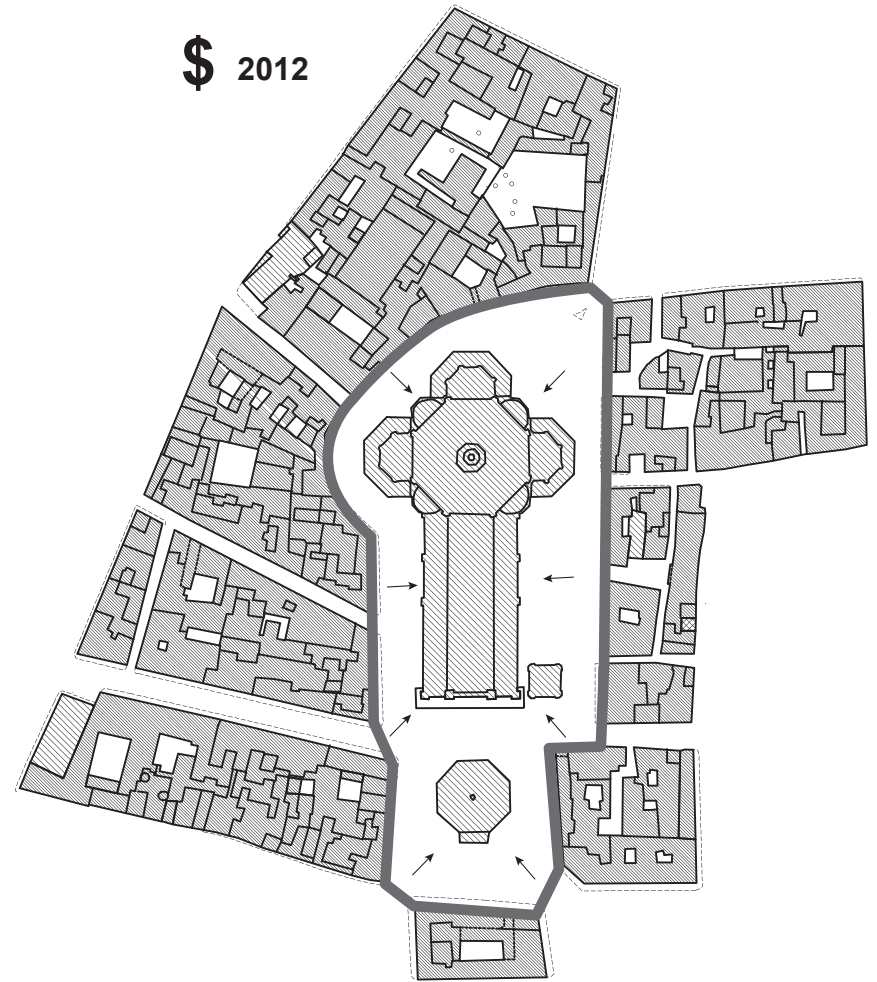
piazza del duomo florence



† 1600

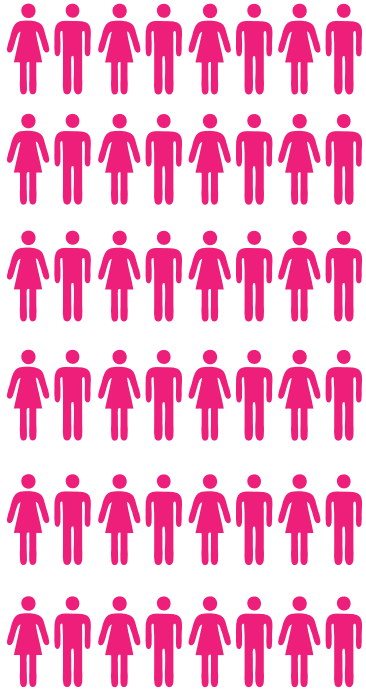


\$ 2012



distribution of religious groups
800 B.C.

paeganism- 90%



nonreligious- 2%

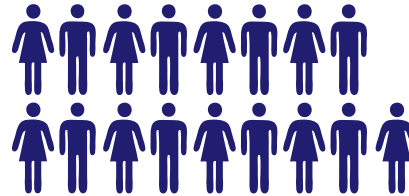


other- 8%



distribution of religious groups
2012

christianity - 33%



islam - 21%



nonreligious - 16%



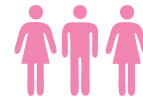
hinduism - 14%



primal-indigenous - 6%



chinese traditional - 6%



buddhism - 6%



judaism - .6%



paeganism- .02%



1268 A.D.

the governmental center

piazza della signoria florence

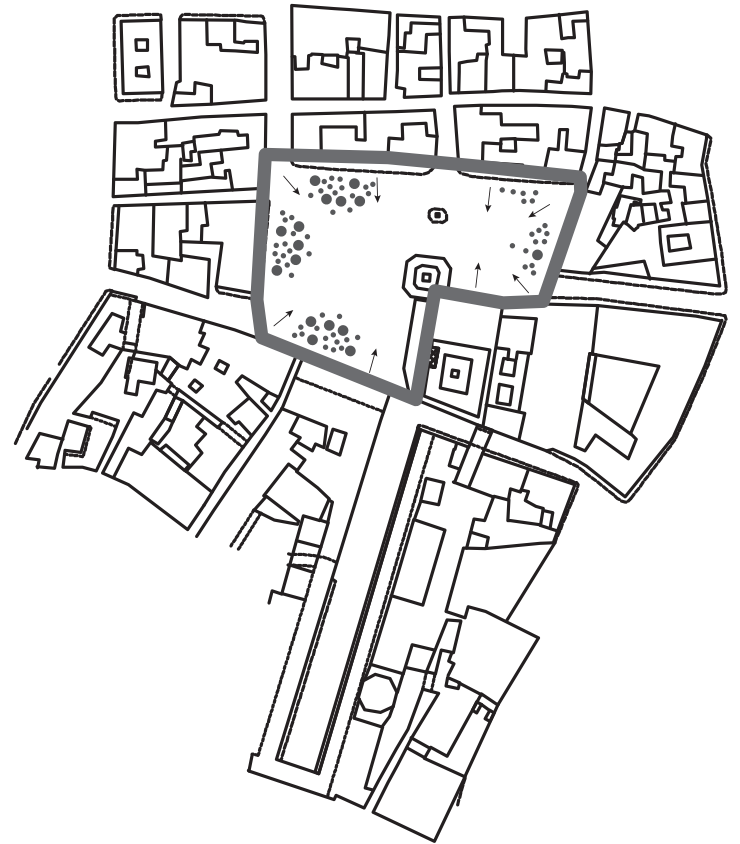
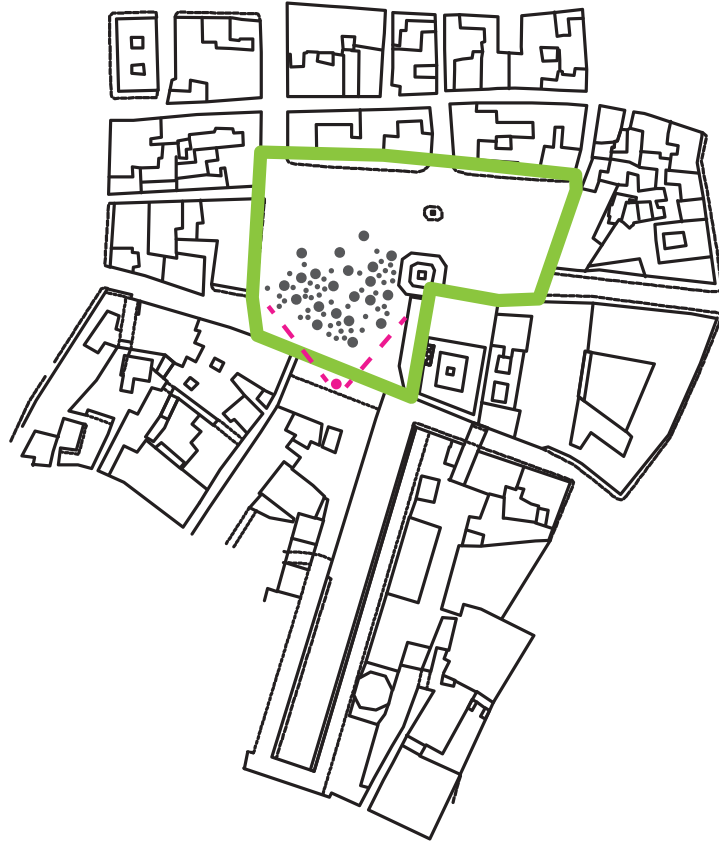
During the medieval period in Florence, piazza della signoria was designed to serve as the political center of the city. Within the piazza sits the city's main government building, Palazzo Vecchio, where members of government would work and make important decisions that would effect the lives of the Florentines.

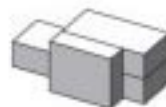
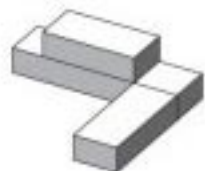
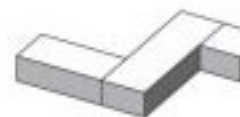
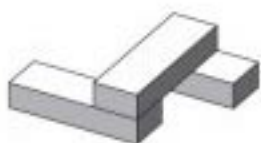
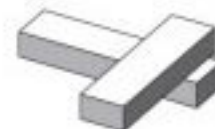
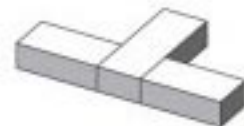
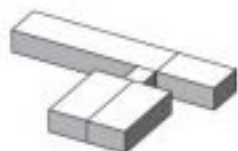
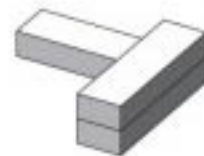
The elites of the city used this piazza as an assembly space, to address the public. The space would also be used for political demonstrations and public punishments to warn the citizens what would happen if they stepped out of line.

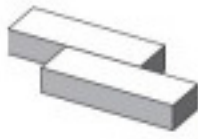
The past few centuries have transformed the piazza entirely. A collection of high end retail shops now surround the periphery of the piazza, and even the governing building in the square, palazzo vecchio, has turned into a way to generate revenue.



Fig. 4
Unknown, painter
*ordeal of girolama savanarola in
piazza signoria*
oil on panel. 38 x 58 cm
Florence, Museo di San Marco







7

constructing a new typology

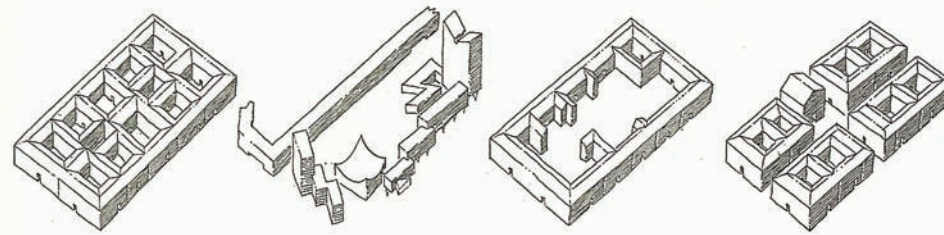
the contemporary public forum

The public forum has thrived so well due to its direct relationships with the institutions surrounding it. Since contemporary culture is drastically different now than it was in antiquity, the forum must couple with a new institution that it has not yet met.

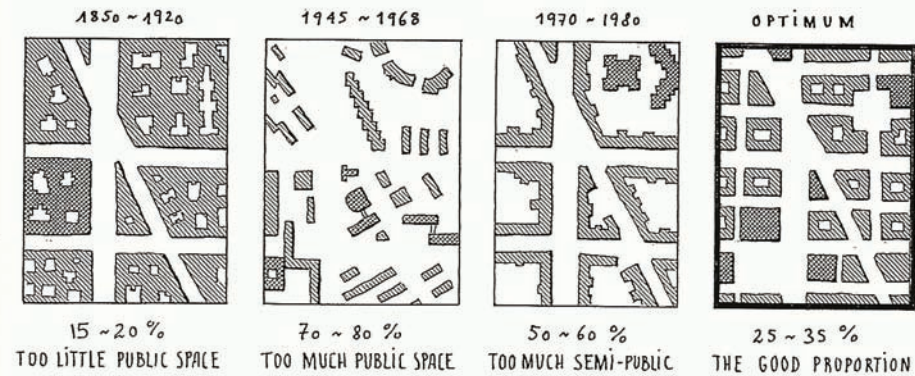
This chapter will look at two new programs that will couple with the forum to create the contemporary version every city will need.

museum

“THE ARCHITECTURE OF COMMUNITY”

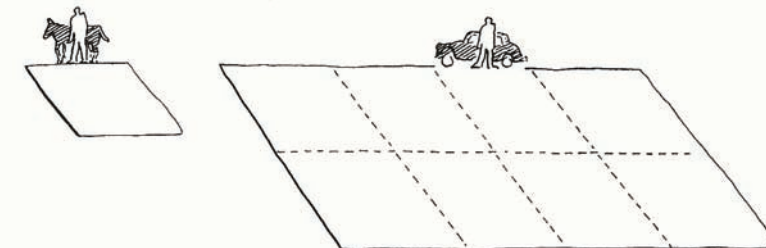


RELATIVE QUANTITY of PUBLIC SPACE



HIERARCHY OF PUBLIC SPACES AND CIRCULATION HIERARCHY

CITY AND LANDSCAPE



THE URBAN MAN

THE SUB-URBAN MAN

MAN · VEHICLE · LAND NEED

transport hub



precedents

transport hubs and markets

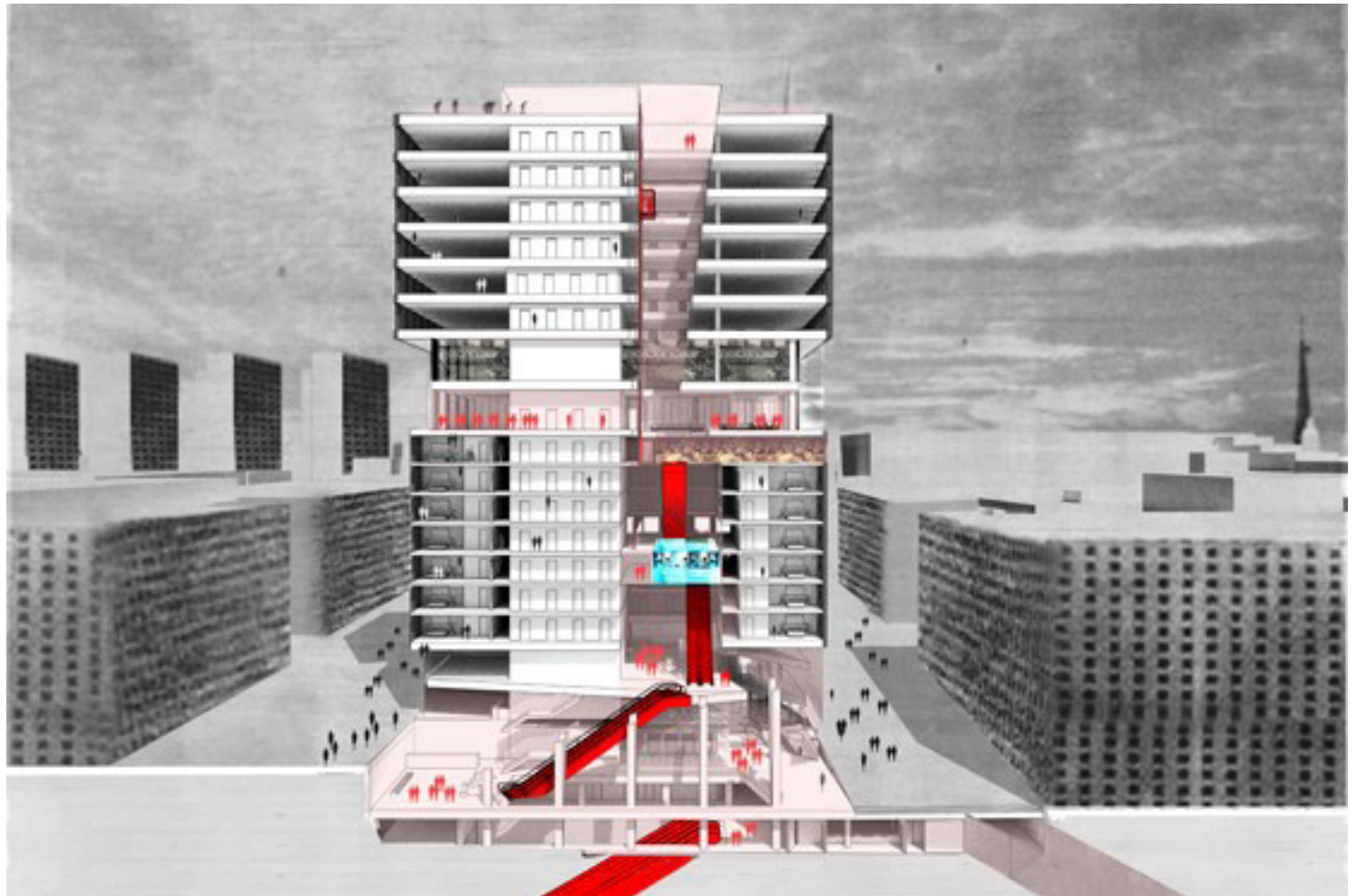
blurring the boundaries

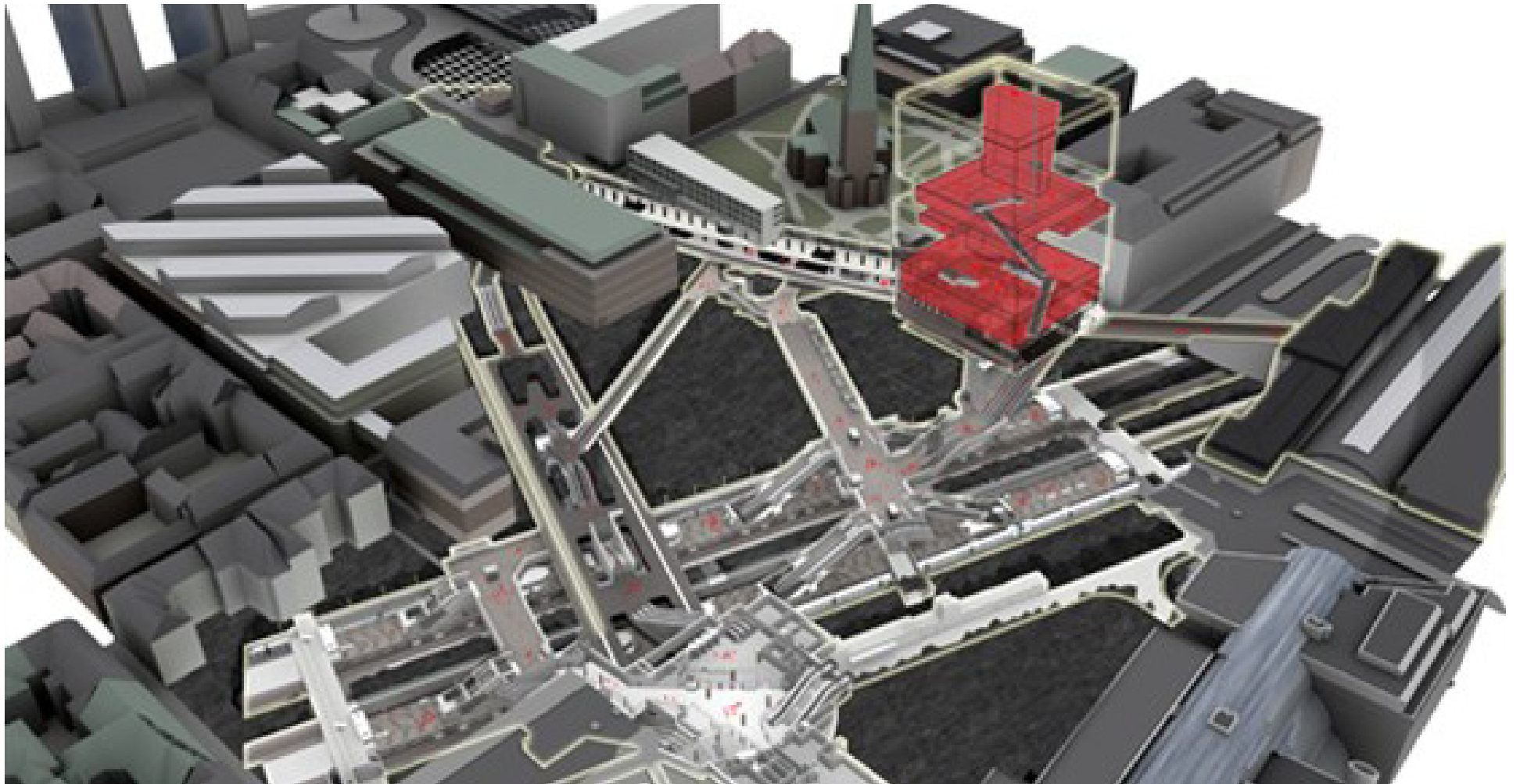
zeebrugge belgium





station city stockholm





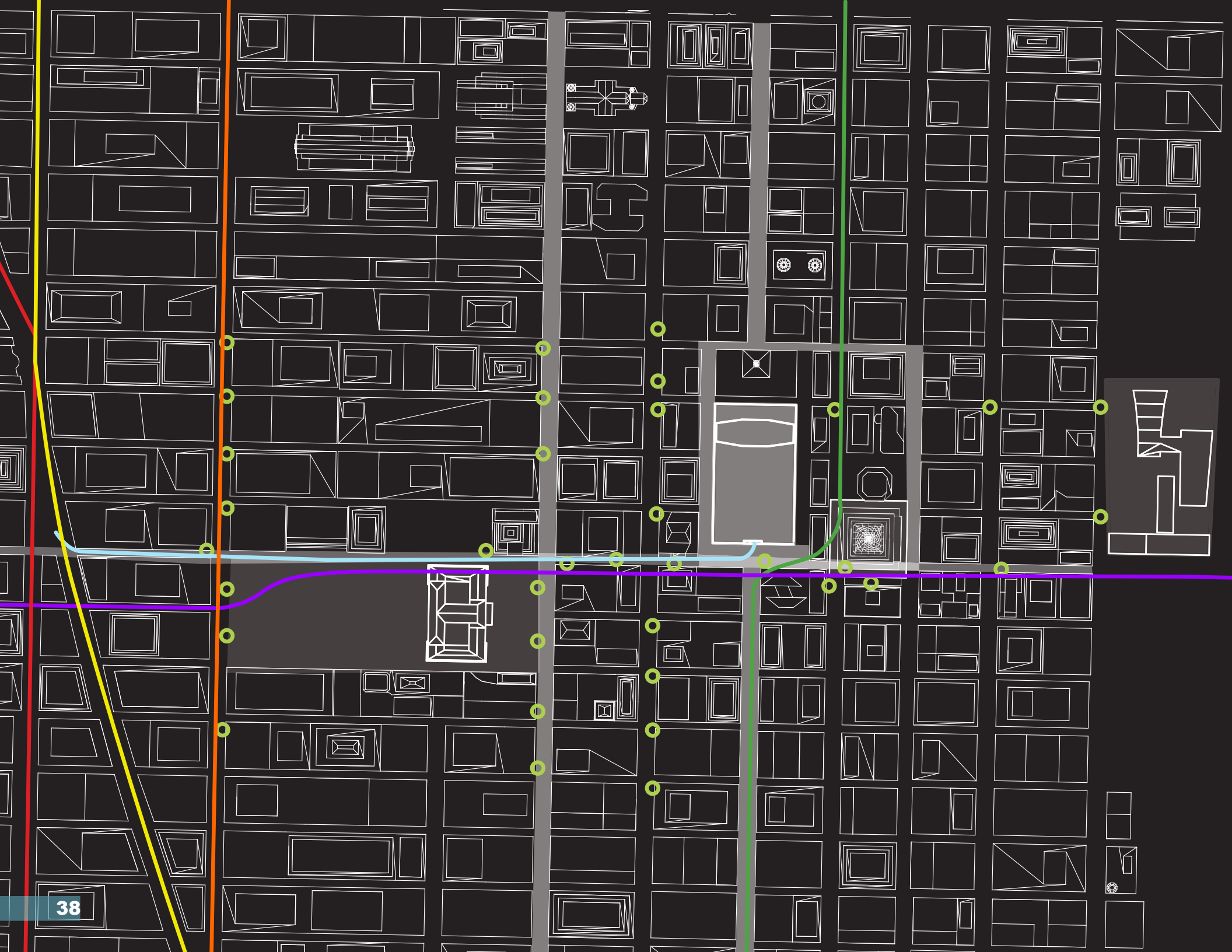




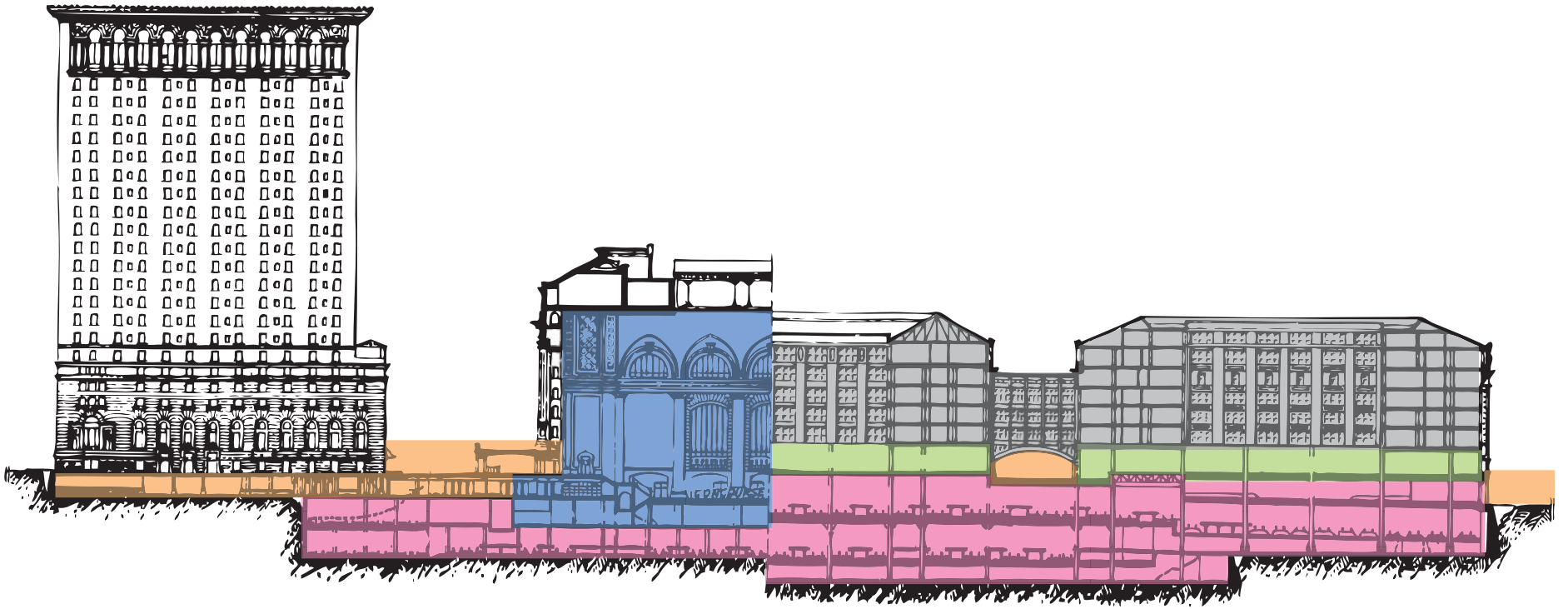
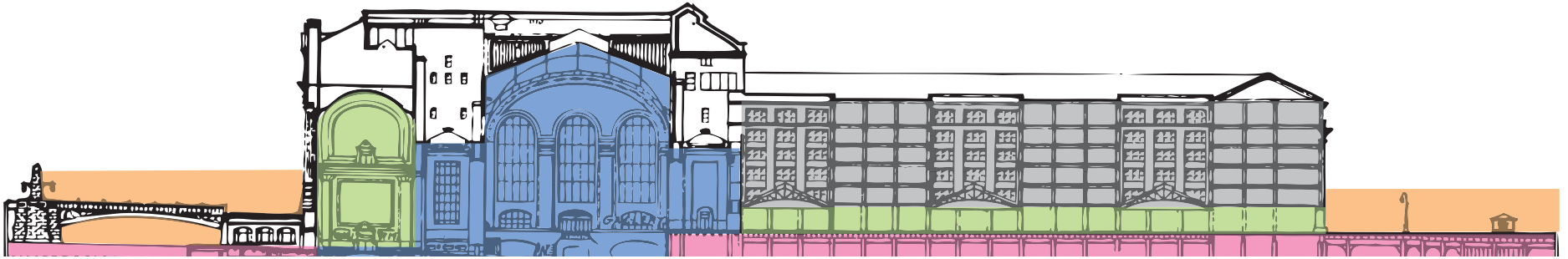
site

*giving the power back to
the people of new york*

New York City is one of the largest and most successful metropolises of the past two centuries. It is a global financial, media, and fashion center and creates tens of millions of jobs for the tri-state area. This highly trafficked island contains some of the busiest transportation hubs in the world. Grand Central Station sees over 40 million annual visitors, and is located in a key area on East 42nd Street and Park Ave. Grand Central will serve as the perfect testing ground, coupled with an art institution program to create the contemporary public forum.







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